

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE TOWN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON, NC

April 18, 2016

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in regular session on Monday, April 18, 2016 at 5:38 p.m. in the Assembly Room at Town Hall.

PRESENT

Mayor: Joyce Whichard-Brown
Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Al Chesson, Jerry Knox, Ronell Rodgers, William Coffield, Ronell Rodgers and Junious J. Horton
Town Administrator: Eric Pearson
Town Clerk: Christina Craft
Finance Officer: Linda Harrison
Public Works Director: Kerry Spivey
Recreation Director: Allen Overby
Director of Planning and Development: Brent Kanipe
Police Chief: Travis Cowan
Fire Chief: James B. Peele, III

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Commissioner Rodgers led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Chesson offered the invocation.

AGENDA APPROVED AS PRESENTED

The Mayor asked if there were any items to be removed or added to the Regular Agenda or the Consent Agenda. Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- (1) Approval of the Minutes of April 4, 2016 Meeting

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Horton and unanimously passed to approve the agenda as presented.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order and asked Commissioner Chesson to give the invocation.

BUDGET WORKSHOP

The Town Administrator reported that the proposed 2016/2017 budget presented is balanced. The proposed budget includes a 3% salary increase for all employees. A salary survey is being done in the current fiscal year which is the first step in the goal identified in the retreat to strengthen salaries.

The health insurance is budgeted for a 30% increase. BlueCross BlueShield has quoted a 45% increase in premiums. In the past, increases were adjusted by increasing the deductible and reimbursing the employee for a portion of the deductible per the continuance of the Board approved plan. This will not be an option with this large of an increase. The Town's insurance agent is currently obtaining other quotes. The budgeted increase may have to be adjusted if a more suitable quote is not obtained.

The OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefit) Trust Fund is a fund dedicated to benefits that are given to eligible retirees. \$100,000 has been budgeted to transfer into the OPEB Trust Fund. Those are benefits

that are given to eligible retirees. 67% will be transferred from the General Fund and the remainder will be transferred from the Enterprise Fund. Money in this fund must be used solely to cover any OPEB expenses.

The property tax rate as the rate will remain at \$0.74 per hundred with no budgeted increase. Martin County has a re-evaluation scheduled in the next year and will impact the 2017/2018 fiscal year. The Water/Sewer rates do not have a budgeted increase. There will be a Storm Water Utility fee added to the bill but the customer's actual bill will not show an increase with the additional fee. There are no more payments due to Martin County for the customers in Water District I & II. The Town Administrator reported that there is a new tax allowed by the State in the amount of up to \$25 for a license plate fee. If the Board considers initiating this fee, the State stipulates that the funds generated must be used for road issues and will have no impact on the General Fund.

Each year, salaries that are paid entirely out of the General fund can be transferred to the Enterprise Fund. Salary and benefit costs of \$629,554 will be transferred into the Enterprise fund. This amount is a portion of salary and benefits from employees that work indirectly for the Water department such as the Finance Officer, Administrator, Town Clerk, Board of Commissioners and others. If the water system is consolidated into a County-wide system, the General Fund will be reduced by approximately \$600,000 annually.

The Planning Department has a budgeted increase of \$2,000 for nuisance enforcement for a total of \$12,000. For example of utilization, these funds are used to tear down abandoned houses. The marketing budget was increased by \$500 which includes an update to the Williamston Long Range plan. The River Landing Project is tracked in a separate Capital Projects Ordinance.

Public Buildings has \$1.1 million included for a major Town Hall/Police Department renovation and is identified in the Police Department as identified in the retreat. This complies with the goal to upgrade Police, Fire Administration, and Public Works. The Police department is very outdated. A study was done a few years ago which included improvements such as the installation of an elevator, increase employee safety by moving Police Department offices into a secured area, expanding the GIS, changing entry pattern to the police department, and expand the Police Department into the bay area. The Fire/Rescue will not be able to move any additional equipment into the current station without a renovation.

The Police Department is also requesting the purchase of 3 patrol cars. This purchase is to be financed and the payments will show in the debt service. The Body Worn Cameras are listed under Small Equipment with an anticipated cost of \$43,000.

The Rapid Response Team (RRT) has a \$69,000 increase in revenue and expenditures. These expenses are covered under the new State contract and will not impact the Town's budget.

The Powell Bill is now shown in a separate fund. The street lights are budgeted at \$125,000. These lights are very expensive which is why staff is very judicious in assuring they are operating properly. That is an annual flat fee charged, regardless if the light functions. This amount should be enough to cover the cost of the annexed area. There is also a line item for a new bucket truck in the Capital Outlay for Streets.

Parks and Recreation has a site plan budgeted for the Gaylord Perry Park in the amount of \$15,000. The air conditioning for the Gaylord Perry gym is also included in the proposed budget in the amount of \$23,000. Mr. Pearson reported that Allen Overby is getting usage totals for the park and gym. The air conditioning is very expensive considering that the building is not well insulated and needs a new roof. The gym area has reached 100 degree Fahrenheit. Additional lights for the Godwin-Coppage Soccer field in the amount of \$50,000 has also been included in the budget.

In the Cultural Department, the \$3,000 increase requested by Hannah Easley for the Martin Memorial Library has been included. There is also an additional \$2,000 for Christmas decorations as none have been purchased or replaced in a couple of years. This amount should be adequate to purchase a couple of small items.

In Economic and Physical Development, a \$10,000 contribution has been allocated for the Boys and Girls Club. This is a three year commitment. The \$97,284 in retiree benefits has been paid for current year expenses. The board has previously limited this benefit as it is a costly expense.

The Powell Bill is a restricted fund balance as all reserves are used. The balance includes a transfer of \$196,250 to Annexation Project for required Street work in the annexation area. The Powell Bill funds must be used for streets. In the annexation, there is a lot of street work. When the annexation was originally adopted, it called for the transfer of Powell Bill money into the Annexation account. This does include \$50,000 for street work which could be increased by \$80,000 if the Board approves the additional license plate fee.

In order to create the Storm Water Fund, the Board gave direction at the retreat to include the Storm water utility fee on the water bill but only if the bill will not show an increase to residential customers with the addition of the fee. It was discussed to reduce the out of town water rates and staff is currently working on final rates. The payment to MCRWASA reduced to \$1,154,904. There are no more payments due to Martin County for Water District I or II customers. Under the Capital Outlay, there is a Sewer Vac and a pickup truck budgeted for the Sewer Department. There is a dump truck, equipment shed, trash pump and a pickup truck budgeted to the Water Department.

Last year, the revenues between the water fund and sewer fund are not covering the costs. Subtle changes have been made to be certain that neither fund subsidizes the other.

The Finance Officer was also available for questions for the proposed budget. There is another work session scheduled for mid-May. The budget presented is a very tight one without many extras. The department directors and the Finance officer worked very hard to get the budget balanced.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Horton and passed to go out of regular session into closed session to address a Personnel Issue per N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (6) and an Economic Development per N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (4).

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson to go out of closed session and into regular session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Coffield and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:

Christina Craft, Town Clerk

Joyce Whichard-Brown, Mayor